

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The **Town of Vinton** is a small, bustling community located in eastern Roanoke County between the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the City of Roanoke and the Roanoke River. With a population approaching 8,000 residents and a land mass slightly larger than 3 square miles, this diversifying urban area strives to sustain its distinctive small-town charm within the greater Roanoke Valley. Due to Vinton's proximity to the railroad, the Town's employment base expanded as a shift to agriculture occurred in the Roanoke Valley. In the early 1900's, Vinton began to see the reemergence of industry and manufacturing with a knitting mill, enamel factory and a canning company established themselves in the Town's limits.



Image 1.0 Aerial view of the Vinton study corridors including: Bypass Road, Washington Avenue and Hardy Road
Source: Town of Vinton 2004-2024 Comprehensive Plan, pg 52

1.1 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The major corridors serving the Town of Vinton and East Roanoke County serve as vital links for access to neighboring jurisdictions as well as amenities such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, Explore Park and Smith Mountain Lake. These corridors are primarily used by residents of

adjacent localities to travel to work in the City of Roanoke, or perhaps by vacationers taking a trip to Smith Mountain Lake. The current and projected traffic volumes along the Vinton study corridors, coupled with planned road improvement, lay the groundwork for future development and redevelopment along the study corridors.

The purpose of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan (hereinafter referred to as the "Plan") is to provide data and information for Roanoke County, the Town of Vinton, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to use in their land use and transportation planning. The research and analysis performed will be useful in identifying and guiding future development and redevelopment opportunities in Eastern Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton. In addition to examining land use and development opportunities, aesthetic issues will be addressed with recommendations for design guidelines and streetscape improvements. Traffic operations and safety will also be evaluated along the study corridors for use by the Vinton Public Works Department and VDOT.

1.2 STUDY AREA

The study area of the Plan is comprised of 7.5 miles of corridors that traverse through the Town of Vinton and East Roanoke County. The study area consists of six corridors: Bypass Road (partial Route 24), Hardy Road (Route 634), South Pollard Street, Virginia Avenue (partial Route 24), Walnut Avenue and Washington Avenue (partial Route 24). These corridors extend from the eastern limits of the City of Roanoke through the Town of Vinton and Eastern Roanoke County to the western border of Bedford County. The boundaries of the study area include lots and parcels of land contiguous to the study corridors from the edge of the right-of-way to the full depth of the lot or parcel, as the lot or parcel existed on the date of the commencement of this plan.

Washington Avenue and Hardy Road are the two major corridors that travel through Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton. These roadways run parallel to one another through the town and serve as the primary links for commuters into the City of Roanoke from Vinton,

neighboring Bedford County, and the Smith Mountain Lake Area. Washington Avenue is also an important access point to the Blue Ridge Parkway. South Pollard Street and Bypass Road serve as important connecting routes between Hardy Road, Virginia Avenue and Washington Avenue. A larger map of the study corridors can be found in Appendix A.

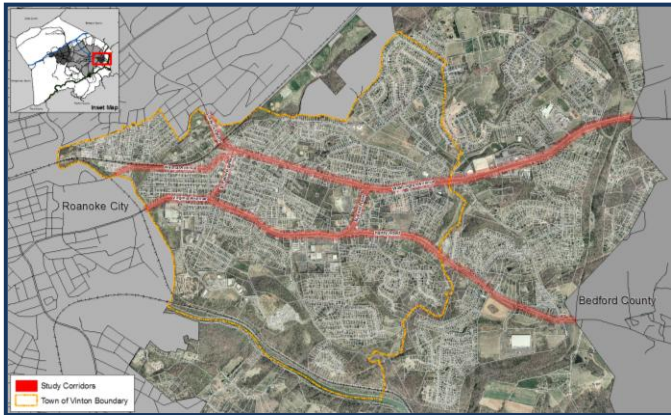


Image 1.2 Vinton Area Study Corridors

1.3 INTENT AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia, Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton are each required to “prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction.”

1.3.1 The Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan

The 2005 Roanoke County Community Plan states:

The Roanoke County Community Plan is a blueprint for the future growth and development of the County over the next 10-15 years. It provides direction and guidance, for both the public and private sectors, in making decisions about land development, public services and resource protection. The Plan allows decision makers to study the long-term consequences of current decisions and recognize that today’s actions will impact the County for many years to come.

One of the fundamental pillars of the Roanoke County Community Plan is to promote regionalism through intergovernmental relations. The Community Plan specifically directs the County to take a lead in “finding

new and innovative ways to look beyond its political boundaries for solutions to the challenges of the next century.” In striving to practice an aggressive and proactive approach to promoting regionalism, it is the County’s belief that this intergovernmental planning effort with the Town of Vinton and the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) will advance this collaborative and cooperative vision for ensuring the prosperity and happiness of the citizens of the Vinton community.

1.3.2 The Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the Town of Vinton’s 2004-2024 Comprehensive Plan is to “redefine the role of the Town of Vinton in the Roanoke Valley Region”. The mission statement for the Town of Vinton reads as follows:

The Vinton Town government will provide its citizens with high quality services that address their individual and collective needs. In partnerships with the community, the Vinton Town government pledges a civic stewardship that is fiscally accountable, socially responsible and worthy of citizen trust.

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan has a vision that incorporates the following central themes:

1. Gateway Entrance/Corridors Improvements,
2. Housing and Neighborhood Preservation,
3. Greenways/Parks and Recreation/Youth Centers,
4. Economic Development, and
5. Downtown Redevelopment.

This Corridor Plan, which is proposed to be adopted into the Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plans, will aid decision-making for future development in the Vinton Area. This document has been assembled to reflect the collective visioning of citizens in the Vinton community. This document is intended to complement the unique characteristics of both Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton, while preserving the small-town atmosphere that is prevalent in Vinton.

1.4 THE PLANNING PROCESS

1.4.1 Inventory of Existing Conditions

In order to gather an accurate and up-to-date representation of the built environment along the study corridors, staff spent several weeks performing an inventory of the existing conditions. This process included a photographic inventory of each parcel with frontage on the study corridors. In addition to these photographs, staff documented existing buildings, signs, parking lots, utilities and other aspects of the built environment along the study corridors. This inventory served as the foundation for analyzing the built environment, streetscape renderings and design guidelines for the study corridors.

In order to fully comprehend the issues, challenges and opportunities present along the study corridors, staff collected information pertaining to environmental resources, land use, community facilities and transportation. The research results on existing conditions can be found in Chapters 2-6.

The existing conditions inventory was complemented with numerous maps. Each map serves as a graphical representation of the research performed. All maps were created using a Geographic Information System (GIS) manufactured by ESRI called ArcMap. These maps can be found at the end of the document in Appendix A.



Image 1.4.1 Staff from Roanoke County on a walking tour in Downtown Vinton to inventory existing conditions.

1.4.2 Community Survey

A community survey was conducted from the middle of January 2009 through the end of February 2009. More details and results from the community survey can be found in Chapter 7. A copy of the survey is located in Appendix B.

1.4.3 Business Participation

The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce represents businesses in the Town of Vinton and Eastern Roanoke County. The mission of the Chamber is to promote a healthy business environment for the Town of Vinton. The Chamber maintains a vibrant leadership role in the Vinton area, addressing critical issues impacting area business owners.

Since the commencement of this plan, staff encouraged the Chamber of Commerce to be an active participant in the process. Staff attended and made presentations at membership meetings, solicited their attendance at community meetings and consulted with the Chamber in identifying development and redevelopment opportunities along the study corridors.

In addition to taking a proactive approach with the Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce, staff sought input from the business owners along the study corridors. Staff conducted one-on-one business owner interviews from December 2008 through February 2009. More details and results of the business owner interviews can be found in Chapter 7.

1.4.4 Community Meetings

For the purpose of gathering input from the public on the progression of the plan, two community meetings were held at the Vinton War Memorial. For more information regarding these meetings, please see Chapter 7.

1.4.5 Stakeholder Meetings

Meetings were held with various stakeholders in the Vinton community, including the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Blue Ridge Parkway. For more information regarding these meetings, please see Chapter 7.

1.4.6 Planning Commission Work Sessions

In their role as an advisory to the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors and the Vinton Town Council, the Roanoke County and Town of Vinton Planning Commissions are tasked with reviewing and refining land use applications and documents, such as the Vinton Area Corridors Plan. Throughout the development of this Plan, staff has continually updated the Roanoke County and Vinton Planning Commissioners on its status at their work sessions.

The first set of work sessions were held on March 12th and 17th 2009. At these work sessions, the Planning Commissioners were presented the results of the public input received at the January community meeting and the community survey.

On March 28, 2009, Roanoke County and Town of Vinton Planning Commissioners, along with members of the Vinton Town Council, attended a staff-led tour of the Vinton study corridors. The purpose of this special work session was to orient the Planning Commissioners with potential issues and opportunities identified during staff's inventory of the existing conditions.



Image 1.4.6 Roanoke County and Town of Vinton elected and appointed officials on a tour of the study corridors.

From June through October 2009, four work sessions were held to present the Planning Commissioners with the results of the public input received at the second community meeting held on June 18, 2009, proposed future land use amendments, and draft goals and recommendations. During these work sessions, the Planning Commissioners developed a draft future land use scenario map to be presented at the Joint Planning Commission Public hearing held in December. These future land use amendments were based off of public input received at community meetings, the results of the community survey and staff recommendations.

1.5 PLAN ADOPTION

1.5.1 Planning Commissions

On December 7, 2009, the Roanoke County Planning Commission and the Town of Vinton Planning Commission held a joint public hearing at the Vinton War

Memorial to present the draft Vinton Area Corridors Plan. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting with four speaking during the public hearing. Their comments / concerns included: improving access to the Post Office and William Byrd High School; installing street improvements; expanding or renovating the Vinton Library; attracting more businesses to the Riverpark Shopping Center; protecting natural resources; improving pedestrian amenities along the corridors and connecting to existing greenways; revising the future land use to a lesser intense land use along Hardy Road in Roanoke County until Hardy Road is improved; developing design guidelines as an implementation strategy; maintaining the appearance of properties along the corridors; and notifying property owners of possible zoning changes.



Image 1.5.1 Approximately 50 people attended the Joint Planning Commission Public hearing held on December 7, 2009.

After discussion and careful consideration, the Planning Commissions voted to forward the Plan to the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors and the Vinton Town Council with a recommendation that the Plan be adopted as part of each jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan.

1.5.2 Board of Supervisors

After receiving the Roanoke County Planning Commission's recommendation, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors held a work session on January 26, 2010....

On February XX, 2010, a public hearing was held. There were XX citizens in attendance to speak for or against the plan. Comments and concerns noted at the public hearing were.....

The Board voted #-# to approve/deny incorporation of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan into the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan.

1.5.3 Town Council

After receiving the Town of Vinton Planning Commission's recommendation, the Town Council held a work session on February 2, 2010....

On February 16, 2010, a public hearing was held. There were XX citizens in attendance to speak for or against the plan. Comments and concerns noted at the public hearing were..... The Town Council voted #-# to approve/deny incorporation of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan into the Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plan.